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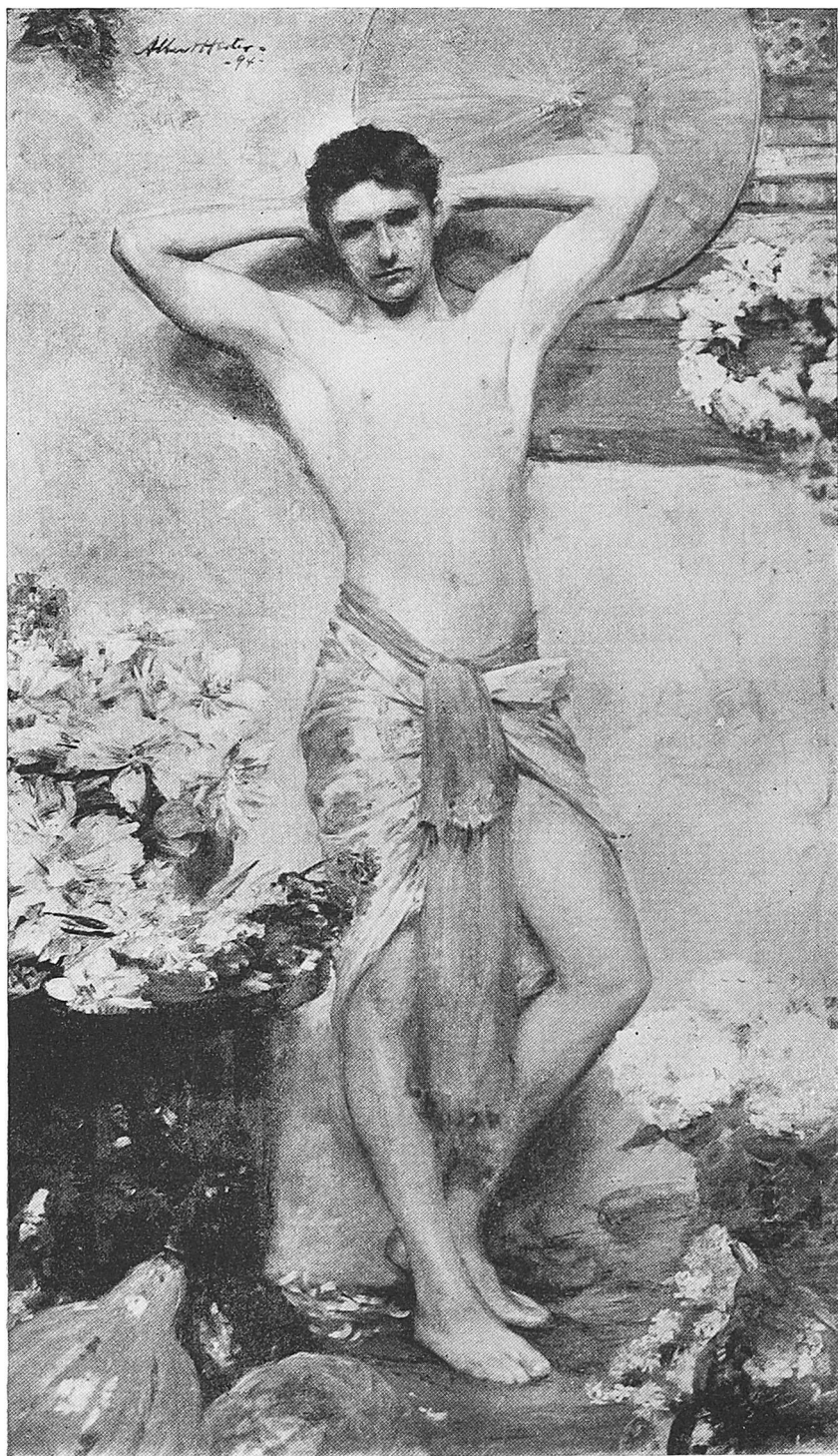
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From a painting by Albert Herter

AN ATHENIAN FLOWER-MERCHANT

The Monthly Illustrator

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"We make no choice among the varied paths where art and letters seek for truth"

JAPAN IN AMERICAN ART

BY GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP

With original illustrations by Albert and Adele Herter.

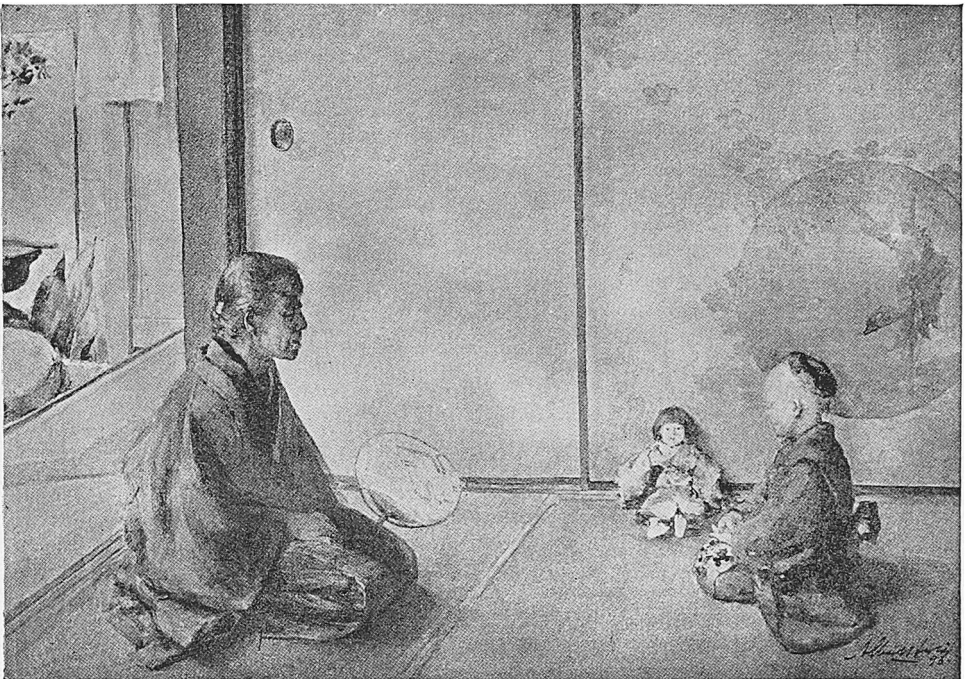
FINE art, poetry, esthetics, often lead the way and "blaze" the trail for the slower advance of politics, statesmanship and general civilization, along some path discovered by the more delicate sensibilities of the imaginative mind. Statecraft and treaties, war and diplomatic peace, issue largely from motives of materialism and commercial greed. Yet they are frequently compelled to follow the lines, or bend their steps to the direction, first laid out by the progressive poet and painter.

This country, it is true, originally sought Japan for purposes of trade and profit. But one of the strongest factors was an intellectual interest in Japanese art.

On the other hand, a curious counter-movement has gradually grown into promi



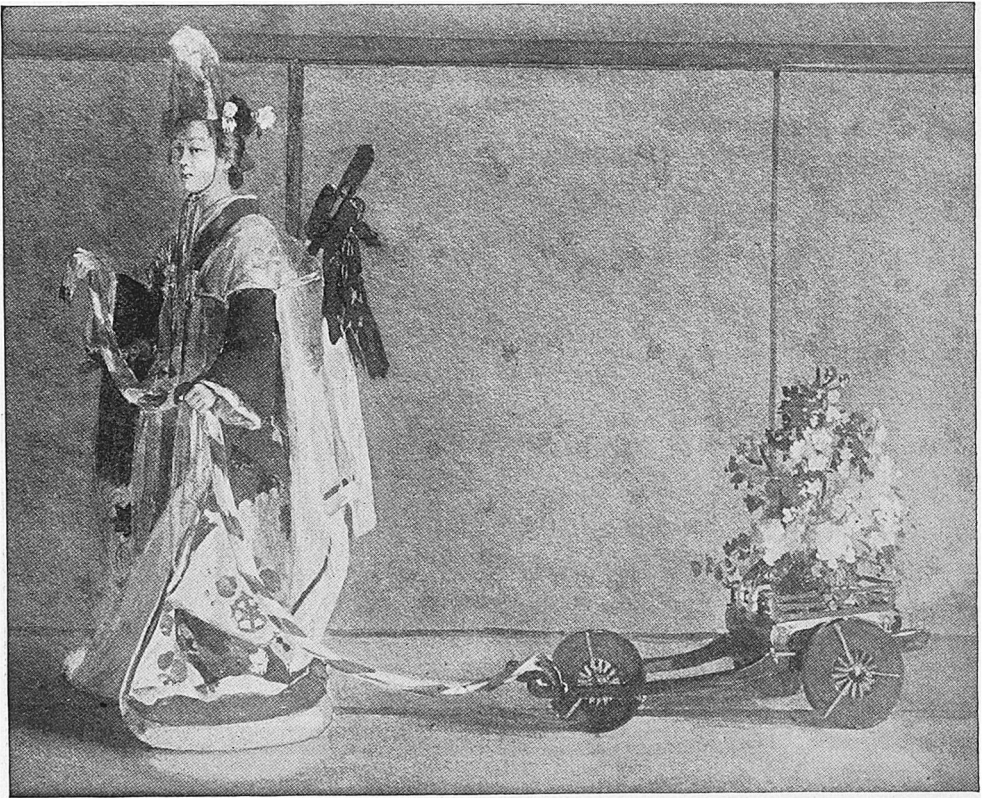
ADELE HERTER



THREE GENERATIONS IN A JAPANESE FAMILY

nence, and has begun to assume distinct proportions, showing definite results, in the study of Japan by American artists, from their own point of view and by their own methods.

At first this representation of Japanese subjects in American art was, no doubt, regarded by the public as a mere quest for the novel and the bizarre. Walter Gay, of Boston, was, I think, one of the first pictorial explorers there, but brought back rather conventional transcripts of Japanese landscape. Although there remains, naturally, in these themes, as treated by later and more sympathetic workers, an element of *grotesquerie*, to the average eye, it is becoming evident, now, that the interchange of artistic impressions and influences between Japan and the United States has a more serious bearing and promise than was formerly supposed.



THE FLOWER-CART,—A STUDY OF JAPANESE CEREMONIAL COSTUME

Striking evidence in this direction is given by the pictures in which Mr. and Mrs. Albert Herter have portrayed Japanese figures and scenes. The frontispiece is an example. The artist tells us that it represents an Athenian florist at rest in the market-place, but it falls well into its Japanese grouping by reason of its peculiarly blended traits of poetry, picturesqueness and naturalism. The pose is an extraordinary one. Yet—strange though the angular lines appear, formed by the elbows, and the forearms reaching in with clasped hands behind the head; the long inward curve of the right leg, and the outward jutting of the left knee;—the total effect is one of natural restfulness and a new sort of grace. The face and head are

not, of course, at all Japanese; but the spirit of the composition is so, at the same time that it brings to bear all the resources of European and American art. It is this fusion of the two elements, of more or less oriental material with an occidental point of view, blended with a sentiment of the far East, that seems to me so suggestive of a new development in art.

In the first of the Japanese real-life studies accompanying this article, we find a curious depiction of a mother, or grandmother, a child, and a doll. All three figures are squatted on the floor. As Lafcadio Hearn says, the Japanese live upon the floor. Their home-life goes on in a sort of "doll's house," but of a very different and much more wholesome kind than Ibsen's. It would be interesting to ascertain, if we could,



From a painting by Adele Herter

A PORTRAIT-HEAD



From a painting by Adele Herter

O-KAMI-SAN

whether they do not, by this child-like and natural mode of life, store up a great reserve-force of mental, physical and nervous power. Certainly they seem to have brought such a reserve-force into play in their dealings with other nations, and in their war with China.

There is one very curious thing about the Japanese, so far as we may judge from pictures and books; and this is, that, while their life and manners are in some respects at the acme of healthful simplicity, in other respects they are bound by a most rigorous artificiality.

The Japanese lady, here shown, who drags by a party-colored cord a little toy-wagon filled with flowers, is a wonderful specimen of extreme conventionality in dress. Mrs. Herter gives us two life-like studies of a Japanese girl, and a Japanese woman in well-designed, waist-banded costumes. These, also, show the rigor of nation-

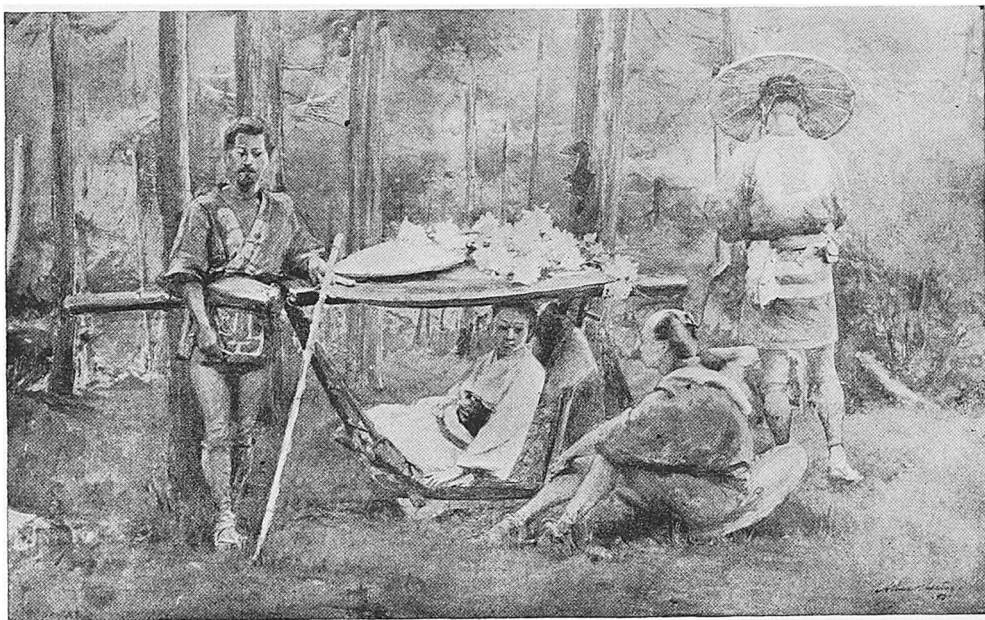
al fashion. Yet in the final illustration in this group we revert to outdoor, sylvan life, and behold bare-legged men pleasantly standing or sitting near the edge of a wood, who have been carrying a young woman in an open palanquin.

What is more immediately to our purpose, here, is that their simplicity and system of existence have perpetuated among them those wonderfully strong, yet delicate, perceptions of color and line in nature and the human figure, which have become instinctive and sure, and form the life of their art.

This art affects and will continue to affect us all. And one of the most interesting ways in which it will do so will be through American pictorial studies of Japanese subjects; for our artists, consciously or unconsciously, absorb the Japanese artistic feeling into their work, and diffuse it again. Mr. and Mrs. Herter, however, have mingled with the Japanese feeling their own American way of looking at things; and we get an entirely unique product.



PHILLIPA PICARD



A REST IN THE WOODS